

T H E
MARRIAGE
O F
BELFAGOR.

Written Originally in *Italian*

B Y.

Nicholas Macchiavel

Secretary of State to *Cosmo* Duke of
FLORENCE.

Now Translated from the Original by—



D U B L I N :

Printed for George Grierson, at the Two
Bibles in Essex-Street, 1719.

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Secretary of State to George Duke of
LORANCE

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T H E

MARRIAGE

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Nicholas Macchiavel, Secretary of State to Cosmo de Medicis, Duke of Tuscany.

WE read in the ancient Records of the Florentine affairs, as we have it from the account of a very holy man, whose life was extremely celebrated by the people of that age, how on a time, being abstracted in prayer, he saw an infinite number of souls, of those miserable mortals who dye under god's displeasure and go to hell, all, or most of them lamenting that they were brought to that wretched state merely by having been married.

Whereat *Minos*, *Rhadamanthus*, and the rest of the infernal Judges marvell'd greatly, and not being able to believe those calumnies upon the femal sex to be true, and complaints increasing ever day, and sufficient Affidavits being laid before *Pluto*, it was resolv'd this case should be maturely examin'd, in the presence of all the infernal Princes, that the proper resolutions might be taken thereupon, in order to discover the fallacy, and know the exact truth of the fact.

The Council being then assembled, *Pluto* thus spake, Tho' I my dearly beloved, by divine appointment, and fatal lot irrevocable, possess this kingdom, and therefore cannot be bound by any judgment heavenly or earthly, notwithstanding it being most prudent, for them who have most power, to submit themselves to the Law, and lay a greater stress upon other peoples judgment than upon their own, I am determin'd to take your advice and be govern'd, as in a case from whence some disrepute might redound to our Empire: for all the souls of men that come into our dominions, agreeing with one voice, that their wives are the cause of their destruction, and this seeming to us impossible, we are afraid, by giving judgment upon this information, we may be censured as too cruel; and by not judging, as not severe enough, and as no Lovers of justice. And because one is the fault of men guilty of too much levity, the other of those that are unjust, and being desirous to obviate both those charges, and being in my self doubtful, I have call'd you together, to advise and assist me, that by your counsels this kingdom, as it has liv'd hitherto without reproach, may do so for the time to come.

The Case appear'd to be of the utmost importance to all those Princes, and worthy their most serious consideration, all agreeing in the necessity of discovering the truth, but differing in the means of doing it, for some were of opinion to send one, and some more, into the world, in the shape of man, to know personally, whether this were true, or no. To a great many others this seem'd very easy to be done, without any manner of trouble, only by racking the souls of several people by various torments to reveal the truth. But the majority advising that some body should be sent, they inclin'd all to this opinion. And finding none that would voluntarily undertake the enterprize, they resolv'd that chance should decide it, and the lot fell upon *Belfagor* a principal devil, but formerly, before he fell from heaven, an Archangel; who tho' he took this employment upon him very much against his will, neverthe less being constrain'd by *Pluto's* commandment, made himself ready to execute what the Council had determin'd, obliging himself to those compacts that had been so solemnly agreed upon among them, which were, that who ever was sent upon this commission should have an appointment of an hundred thousand ducats, with which summ he should come into the world, and in the shape of a man take a wife, and live with her ten years; and then feigning to dye, return, and from him own experience, make an authentick deposition before his superiors of the inconveniencies and conveniencies of matrimony. It was also decreed, that during that space he should be, subject to all the uneasinesses, and all the evils, that men are lyable to, as poverty, prison, sickness, and every other misfortune, except he could extricate himself by some cunning, or slight of his own invention.

Then

Then *Belfagor*, having accepted of the conditions and the money, came into the world, and having taken an Equipage of horses and gentlemen out of his own Clan, he made a most splendid Entry into *Florence*, which City he chose, preferably to all others, for his residence, as appearing to him the fittest to bear with those who employ their money in the art of usury: and calling himself *Roderigo de Castilia*, he hir'd a house in the street of All-saints: and that people might not trace out who he was, he gave out that he left *Spain* some time ago, and went into *Asia* and got the best part of his Estate in *Aleppo*, whence he departed to come into *Italy*, to take a wife in a place more civiliz'd, and therefore more to his mind. Now *Roderigo* was a very handsome man, and seem'd to be about thirty years of age, and having in a short time made ostentation of his vast wealth, and shewing himself very courteous, and very generous, several of the old nobility, who had store of daughters and little money, offer'd him a wife out of them; he soon made choice of a very pretty young Lady call'd *Honestà*, daughter to *Amerigo Donati*, who had three sons grown men, and the other three girls also were almost ready for husbands. And tho' he was of a very ancient family, and in very good repute in *Florence*, nevertheless considering his numerous charge, and his quality, very poor: *Roderigo* made a most magnificent and splendid wedding, omitting none of those things that are usually desir'd upon those occasions, for by the Law impos'd upon him at coming out of hell he was to be subject to all human passions. He presently began to take pleasure in the honors and pomp of the world, and of being commended among men, which put him to no small expence. Besides he had not liv'd long with

with his *Monna Honesta*, but he grew beyond all measure fond of her, and could not live when he saw her melancholy, or never so little out of humor.

Monna Honesta brought with her into *Roderigo's* house, together with her quality and beauty, so much pride, that *Lucifer* himself had not near so much, and *Roderigo* who had try'd both, reckon'd that of his wife, superior. But it increas'd prodigiously so soon as she found he doated upon her, and thinking she might domineer over him on every side, she laid commands upon commands on him without any mercy or respect, and made no scruple to snarl at him in opprobrious, and indecent language when ever he presum'd to deny her any thing, which must have been an incredible vexation to poor *Roderigo*. Yet notwithstanding, a regard to the father in Law, the brothers, the kindred the matrimonial obligation, and above all the great love he bore her, made him have patience. I will pass over the vast expence he was at, to content her with new fashions, and please her with new trinkets, which our City continually varies by a natural kind of custom, and because he would fain live at peace with her, he was forc'd to help his father in law to marry off the rest of his daughters, which cost him a very large summ of money. After this, still willing to be quiet, he could do no less than send one of her brothers to the Levant with cloath, and another to the West-Indies with stuffs, and enable the third to set up a gold-beaters shop in *Florence*: in which matters he expended the greatest part of his fortune. Beside all this, in the time of the *Carnaval* and at *St. John's-tide*, when all the Town, by ancient custom is making merry, and that several nobles and rich Citizens

do themselves honour by splendid masks and entertainments *Monna Honesta*, being inferior to no other Ladies, would have her *Roderigo* out do them all upon these festival occasions. All which matters for the reasons aforesaid were bore patiently by him, and tho' excessive, yet he would not have thought it grevous, had it procur'd him peace at home, and if he could have waited quietly, for the time of his ruin; but the contrary was his fate, for together with those insupportable expences, the insolence of her nature brought him a thousand vexations, and both maid, and men servants were so far from bearing it long, that they could scarcely endure it a few days, whence proceeded a most horrid uneasiness to *Roderigo*, for he could not keep a servant that was in his interest, and to say nothing of the rest, those very devils, whom he had brought with him in the shape of domesticks, chose rather to return to hell, and abide in the fire, than live in the world under her dominion.

Roderigo then being in this tumultuous and unquiet way of life, and having by those exorbitant expences, consum'd the remainder of his goods and furniture, he began to have nothing to live upon, but the hope of some Returns he expected from the *Levant* and *West-Indies*; and having still good credit, he took up money upon his bills, to keep up his port, and when they circulated back, he was soon taken notice of by those who are vers'd in that kind of traffick: and while his case was yet tender, of a sudden there came news both from the *Levant* and the *West-Indies*, that one of *Monna Honesta's* brothers, had plaid away all *Roderigo's* cargo; the other, returning back upon a ship freighted with merchandize for his account, was lost, Vessel and
all

all, without any benefit by Insurance, or otherwise.

This business was no sooner divulg'd than *Roderigo's* Creditors laid their heads together, and judging him a bankrupt, tho' they could not be sure of it, the day of Payment not being yet come, they concluded however they should do well to watch him so artfully, that he might not give them the slip before the time limited. *Roderigo* on the other hand, seeing no remedy in the case, and knowing how strictly the infernal law bound him up, he design'd by all means to fly for it, and mounting on horseback one morning he went out at the gate call'd *del Prato*, happening to live near it, and he was no sooner seen going off, but the cry was rais'd among his creditors, who had recourse to the magistrate, not only by the way of messengers, but in a popular way also they sent several hurrying after him. *Roderigo*, when the cry was rais'd behind him, was not got a mile from the city, so that finding himself distress'd, he resolv'd to quit the high road, and get over the fields to seek his fortune: but being hinder'd by the abundance of ditches that cross the country every where thereabouts, he was forc'd to leave his horse in the road, and fly on foot, from close, to close under the covert of the vines, the osiers, and cane-grounds, till he came a little above *Peretola*, to the house of *John Matteo del Bricca*, a tenant of *John del Bene's*, and found him by chance at home foddering his oxen, and beg'd, he would save him, promising him that if he deliver'd him from the hands of his enemies, who pursu'd him, only to throw him into prison, that he might perish there, he would engage to make him a rich man; and before he left him, he would give him such a taste of his ability to perform his promise, that he should believe him, and in case he did not, he

would give him leave to deliver him up to his enemies.

John Matteo tho' a country man, was a fellow of spirit, and thinking he could lose nothing by saving him, assur'd him he would, and putting him into a dunghil he had in his yard, he cover'd him over in hast with dirty straw, and brush-wood that lay at hand. *Roderigo* was but just hid when his pursuers arriv'd, and whatever threat'nings they made use of, they cou'd never get out of *John Matteo* that he had seen such a person: so that they went on forward, and having in vain searcht every where for him that day and the next, they return'd to *Florence* quite tir'd with the pursuit. *John Matteo* then, the noise being over, drew him out from his covert, and requir'd the performance of his word, to whom *Roderigo* said; brother I am infinitely oblig'd to thee, and will satisfy thee by all means, and that thou mayst believe I am able to do it, I will tell thee who I am, and here he told him his story, with an account of the law impos'd upon him at his coming out of hell, and of the wife he had taken; and farther told him in what manner he design'd to enrich him, which in short was this.

That as soon as he should hear any woman was possess'd with a devil, he should believe, he *Roderigo*, was in her, and that he would never come forth till he came to exorcise him, whereby he would have an opportunity to be paid his own price by the relations of the possess'd: And having both agreed upon this conclusion, he vanish. Many days were not past before it was spread all about *Florence*, how a daughter of Messer *Ambrogio Amadei* who had married *Buonaiuto Tebalducci*, was possess'd with a devil. The parents you may be sure did not fail to have recourse to the remedies usual up-
on

on the like accidents; clapping the head of *St. Zanobius* upon hers, and wrapping her in *St. John Gualberto's* cloak; all which experiments *Roderigo* laught at. And to satisfy every body that the young maidens distemper was a spirit, and no fantastical imagination, it spoke latin, held philosophical disputes, and discover'd the sins of divers; and among the rest, those of a Fryar, who had kept a girl in the habit of a young fryar-novice, above four years in his cell, which things made all people admire. All this while *Messer Ambrogio* liv'd very much discontented, and having in vain try'd all remedies, he had lost all hopes of her cure, when *John Matteo* came to him, and promis'd him to cure his daughter upon condition he would give him five hundred Florins to buy a place at *Peretola*.

Messer Ambrogio accepted of the offer, and *John Matteo*, having first caus'd certain Masses to be said, and perform'd his other ceremonies to set off, and adorn the business, he drew close to the young maidens ear, and said: *Roderigo*, I am come to find thee out, to put thee in mind of thy promise. To whom *Roderigo* answer'd; I am contented, but this is not enough to make thee a rich man; and therefore as soon as I depart hence I will enter into the daughter of *Charles* king of *Naples*, and will never stir thence without thee. I will make thee have a bargain to thy hearts desire, and thence-forth thou shalt give me no more trouble: he had no sooner whisper'd this, but he left her to the great joy, and admiration of all *Florence*.

Not long after, it was divulg'd thro' all *Italy* how the daughter of King *Charles* was possess'd, and, finding no cure from able Fryars, the king at length had advice of *John Matteo*, and immediately sent for him to *Florence*, who being arriv'd at *Naples*, af-

ter

ter some feign'd ceremonies, cur'd her: But *Roderigo* before he went off told him; thou feel'st *John Matteo* I have made good my promise of enriching thee, and therefore having discharg'd the debt of obligation, I am now no further indebted at all: wherefore be pleas'd to come no more in to my presence, for if thou doest, as I have hitherto done thee good, I will hereafter do thee mischief. *John Matteo* being return'd to *Florence* very rich, for he had got better than fifty thousand ducats, from the king, he intended to enjoy that wealth peaceably, not believing however that *Roderigo* would offer to do him any harm.

But this design was suddenly interrpted by a report that came how a daughter of *Lewis* the seventh king of *France* was also posses'd with a devil, which News totally disconcerted *John Matteo's* mind, reflecting on the power of that prince, and on the words that *Roderigo* had said to him. The king then finding no remedy for his daughter, and hearing of the Virtue, that was in *John Matteo* he first sent a common messenger to desire him to come, but he pretending some indisposition, the king was forc'd to apply to the Regency, who compell'd *John Matteo* to obey.

He went to *Paris* very disconsolate, and first remonstrated to the king, that indeed he had something which had formerly cast out a devil or two but he could not therefore tell how to cast out all, especially because there are some of so perverse a nature, that they fear neither threatnings, nor charms, nor any religion; yet he would do his endeavours, but if they should fail he beg'd his Majesty's pardon and mercy, whereto the king reply'd in a passion, that if he did not cure her, he would hang him. *John Matteo* was in great affliction

fiction; but taking heart he caus'd the poorest patient to be brought to him, and laying his mouth to her ear, recommended himself in the most humble and submissive manner to *Roderigo*, reminding him of the good office he had done him, and how ungrateful it would be in him to abandon him in that necessity. To which *Roderigo* reply'd; What Sirrah, thou treacherous rascal, hast thou the impudence to come before me? dost thou think thou shalt be able to boast that thou art enrich'd by my means? I will let thee and every body see, that I can give and take away every thing at pleasure, and I will certainly make thee be hang'd whatever comes of it.

John Matto finding this would not do, he was resolv'd to try his fortune another way, and dismissing the princess he said to the king, Sir, as I have told you there are several Spirits of so malignant a kind, that there is no good to be done with them, and this is one of that sort: But notwithstanding I will make one experiment more, which if it succeeds, your Majesty and I shall have our intent; and if it does not, I shall be in your power, and hope you will do by me as my innocence deserves. Pray, let there be a theatre made on the Place of *Notredame* so large as to hold all your Barons and clergy of this City; cause it to be hung with cloth of gold Arras, and let there be an Altar rais'd in the midst thereof, and on Sunday morning next thou with all thy Princes and Barons and the Clergy, in royal pomp, and rich robes, assemble your selves upon it, where, a solemn Mass being first celebrated, thou shalt send for the poorest. Besides all this on one side of the place I will have at least twenty persons with Trumpets, clarions, drums, bagpipes, cymbals, hautboys, and other

ther loud instruments that (upon my holding up my hat) shall sound and rattle all at once, and advance towards the theater: which things, together with some certain secret remedies, will, I believe, drive away this Spirit.

All was immediately order'd by the king, and Sunday morning being come, and the Scaffold fill'd with princes and men of Quality, and the place with the common People, after celebration of the Mass, the posselt Lady came forth, conducted up to the theater between two bishops, and a great many lords. When *Roderigo* saw such a multitude together, and such mighty preparations, he was amaz'd and said to himself: what does this scoundrel Bumpkin intend to do? does he think to fright me with all this Tintamar? does not he know that I am us'd to see all the pomps of heaven, and all the furies of hell? I will chastize him by all means. And *John Matteo* drawing near, praying him to come forth, *Roderigo* said to him: Oh thou art a merry fellow, what do'st thou intend to do with all this preparation of thine? thinkest thou to scape my power and the wrath of the King? pitiful scoundrel, I will have thee hang'd right or wrong.

Thus, one renewing his intreaties, and the other his ill language, *John Matteo* did not think fit to lose any more time, and making the sign with his hat, all they who were appointed to make the noise, began to rattle and drum and sound with such a din as reacht the skyes: marching forward toward the theater: at which noise and bustle *Roderigo* prickt up his eares, and not knowing what it was, and being very much astonisht, quite confounded he ask'd *John Matteo* what was the matter, to whom *John Matteo* in the greatest surprise

surprize said; oh my dear *Roderigo*, yonder is your wife coming to look for you. It was a wonderful thing to see what perplexity of mind *Roderigo* was in at hearing the name of wife, so great, that not staying to reflect whether it was reasonable or possible it should be she, without replying a word, frighted he fled, and left the young lady free, choosing rather to go back to hell instantly to render an account of his actions, than subject himself again to all the vexations, disturbances and dangers of the matrimonial yoke. And so *Belfagor* being return'd to hell, made oath in full Court of the evils that a wife brings with her into a family, and *John Matteo*, who was too cunning for the devil in his own way return'd home jocund to his house.

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